

Pranam

ANANDA MARGA PRACARAKA SAMGRAHA SUVA SECTORIAL NEWSLETTER - SUMMER 2007

*Proceed
to the
inner
world...
deeper,
deeper
and still
deeper...*



Baba Stories • News • Activities • Poetry • Photos • Articles

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Pranam

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Supreme Command

Those who perform sadhana twice a day regularly, the Parma Purusha will certainly arise in their minds at the time of death. Their liberation is a sure guarantee. Therefore every anandamargii will have to perform sadhana twice a day regularly, verily is this the command of the Lord.

Without Yaama and Niyama, sadhana is an impossibility. Hence the Lords command is also to follow Yama and niyama .

Disobedience to this command is nothing but to throw oneself into the tortures of animal life for scores of years. That no one should have undergone the torments such as these, that everyone might be enabled to enjoy the eternal blessedness under the loving shelter of the Lord, it is the bounden duty of every ananda margii to endeavour to bring all to the path of bliss. Verily is this a part in parcel of sadhana to lead others along the path of righteousness.

Shrii Shrii Anandamurtiji

"Those who overreact at the least provocation lose their power of judgment. One's internal power is determined by the degree of control one has over one's nerve cells. A person who cannot tolerate even a single provocative word obviously has no control over the nerves. He will never be able to do anything great because his self-confidence is easily shattered. One must develop the power of tolerance. "

Editorial

Baba said: "You should keep the mind cool and calm every moment. You should never react to any stimulus immediately although you must maintain proper knowledge about your environment. (You must be well-informed.) To have a calm and cool mind, one needs spiritual practice. Therefore, whatever others may say, your daily spiritual practices should not be reduced or neglected. Without the strength of mind achieved by spiritual practice nothing great can be accomplished. "

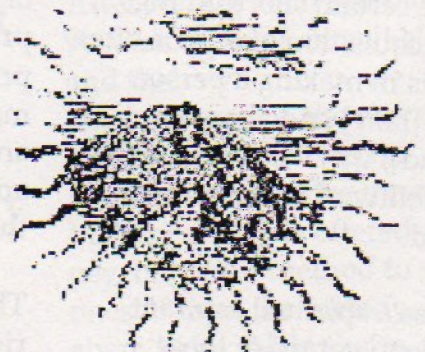
There is so much to do in our busy lives and often this simple truth that Baba tells us here is easy to forget. That is, nothing great can be done without the strength of mind, calmness and clarity (universal vision) gained from proper and regular sadhana.

Clarity and universal vision comes from cosmic ideation, a direct result of sadhana.

If it means going to bed early so we can get up early for panchajanya or so we can do a decent length of sadhana, then so be it. We are only fooling ourselves if we think we don't have "time" for proper sadhana. Baba once explained that Neo-humanism is action done with spiritual ideation. No ideation means no Neo-Humanism!

Recently Baba told me in a dream I needed to go deeper in my sadhana. I knew He meant spending more time in Dhyana as it was one area of my sadhana I was too quick with at times lately. But I'm sure we all have different areas in our sadhana that we can "go deeper in"! Even if its just spending more time in sadhana.

It's not wasting time if we find our minds are always wandering in sadhana. Baba once explained if we spend a long time in sadhana but the mind is wandering, that's OK. In time it will gradually wander less and concentrate more. The point is, make the effort and let Baba do the rest. And of course, Kiirtan before sadhana is a great way to combat a wandering mind!



Field walk in Rotterdam

About 15 devotees went together with Baba on one field-walk into a park of many small bushes. Baba spoke about the forefathers of Holland coming from Scandinavia almost 3000 years ago. He also said that the people of Holland have a very strong connection with water.

At one point Baba stopped, sat on a bench and posed a question, "Is there any reason to have a fear complex?" And He answered in the next moment, "There is no reason to have any complex at all." Then He asked one sister if she would like to sing a song. She said protectively and a bit shyly, "No, Baba." Baba repeatedly told her not to have any fear complex, in fact not to have any complex at all. Another sister said, "But we have so many Baba. How do we get rid of them?" Then Baba replied, "Shall I tell you the secret?" — and He paused for a moment — then He said, "Do more Kiirtan".

Safe Guards against the Defeats of Jinana and Karma

by Shrii Shrii Anandamurti

Jina'na (Knowledge), karma (action) and bhakti (devotion) are essential for the attainment of Parama Purus'a -- the cherished goal of life. It is through jina'na and karma that bhakti is aroused, and it is bhakti that leads human beings to that supernal bliss.

While bhakti is free from any defect, jina'na and karma may create certain shortcomings. The acquisition of jina'na often results in making a person alasa [lazy] and aham'ka'rii [proud]; while karma has the possibility of making a person proud.

Unless a spiritual aspirant is able to get rid of these defects, the aspirant cannot be established in kevala' bhakti [non-attributional devotion], which is absolutely essential for the attainment of Parama Purus'a. The wise will, therefore, adopt such a conduct as to save themselves from the evil effects of jina'na and karma.

In order for sa'dhakas to save themselves from the evil effects of jina'na, they must learn how to get rid of those effects, and thus preclude the possibility of allowing their jina'na to be converted into bandhya'

jina'na [sterile knowledge], which is so much in evidence among the intellectuals of today. This bandhya' jina'na, instead of being a source of inspiration to march on the path of progress, leads humans or society to utter destruction and decay.

It has been observed that those engaged in the acquisition of jina'na lose touch with practicality. Their constant preoccupation with books makes them lazy and lethargic, and they become shy of work; and this eventually leads to their downfall.

The golden rule for getting rid of one's defects is that one should first create opposite feelings and ideas in the mind, and then bring them into execution. In order to avoid laziness, therefore, one will have to work hard. Work is the manifestation of the Supreme Entity, so everyone will have to work, and work in greater and greater measure. Karma Brahmeti karma bahu kurviita ["Work is Brahma, therefore work more and more."]

Work here does not mean just any engagement [of the faculties] which yields no result. Work is work only

when it is directed towards collective welfare. It is of utmost importance that everyone engage himself or herself in materializing the plan for collective welfare. That alone will save him or her from the evil of laziness and lethargy.

Aham'ka'ra

The aham'ka'ra [pride] that creeps into a person due to the acquisition of jina'na has very serious repercussions in human life. It can lead to the complete downfall of the individual. Aham'ka'ra falls into three basic types, and each of the types brings disastrous results:

Abhima'nam' sura'pa'nam'
Gaoravam' raoravam'
dhravam;
Pratis't'ha' shúkariivis't'ha'
Trayam' tyaktva' Harim'
bhajet.

[Abhima'na is like sura'pa'na, gaorava leads to raorava, and pratis't'ha' is like shúkariivis't'ha': an inflated ego is like drinking wine, self-aggrandizement leads one into the deepest hell, and social status is like the excrement of a pig. Give up all three of these

and only sing the glories of the Lord.]

The first type of aham'ka'ra is called abhima'nam, which means that a person thinks that he or she deserves more than what he or she is getting; and consequently develops an overbearing attitude towards everyone. Abhima'na has been compared with drinking: anyone who indulges in it loses his or her discriminating judgment, just as a drunkard does. (A human is different from an animal only because he or she possesses viveka [faculty of discrimination] and buddhi [intellect]. And just as a drunkard gradually loses these priceless faculties, an abhima'nii also becomes bereft of them.) Since the loss of the rational faculty goes against cardinal human virtues, drinking is a pa'pa [sin]. Similarly, abhima'na is a pa'pa, and leads to the downfall of the individual.

Gaorava is the second type of aham'ka'ra. It means "self-aggrandizement". Puffed up with vanity, a person will want to project his or her image in an exaggerated manner. Often we hear somebody say, for example, that they have a rose the size of a balloon in their garden -- whereas actually the rose may be the size of a ping-pong ball. Constant indulgence in this type of activity converts the mind into matter.

We have seen bulls moving about in the streets with an air of arrogance. Such a bull creates a sound expressing the idea that it is big -- Ham bar'a'. But when the bull dies and ta'nt [vina string] is made out

of its intestines and musicians start playing on it, the sound which is then emitted expresses the idea Tun bar'a' - meaning thereby that the bull realizes that others are big, and realizes that he has arrived at this condition because of his arrogance.

In fact the inculcation of gaorava leads one to the worst hell. Just as there are six layers, or lokas, of the Cosmic Mind above the crude world, so are there six types of hell, six narakas, below the physical world. The names of these hells are tala, atala, tala'tala, pa'ta'la, atipa'ta'la and rasa'tala. Another term for rasa'tala is raorava naraka

"So it is a must to do a lot of kiirtana, so that the person does not get time to indulge in the despicable activity of slandering"

-- and a person indulging in gaorava will certainly go to raorava.

(It must, however, be remembered that all these hells or narakas are not actually to be found below this earth. These various narakas denote the mental and physical states of human beings. A person whose mind has been converted into matter like that of a stone is really not worthy to be called a human being, because he or she has lost the mental qualities of a human being. A person of this type is

said to be living in naraka.: Na svargo na rasa'talah ["There is no heaven and no hell"].)

The third type of aham'ka'ra is [the desire for] pratis't'ha' -- the desire to make oneself known. A person influenced by [the desire for] pratis't'ha' expects respect from everyone, and hankers after name and fame. This mental state can be easily compared with the mental condition of a beggar. The beggar asks money from others, while the person craving for prestige begs others to give him or her respect. [The person desires something that] is really meaningless and possesses no value, something that has been fitly compared to the excrement of a pig.

Curing These Defects

After having analysed the various types of aham'ka'ra and their evil effects, we need to examine the ways and means of getting rid of these defects. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu has offered a psychological method to save oneself from the malady of aham'ka'ra. Aham'ka'ra is really a mental ailment, and a person suffering from this disease requires psychological treatment. The following shloka summarizes the line of treatment suggested by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu:

Trn'a'dapi suniicena taroriva
sahis'n'una;
Ama'niina'm' ma'nadeyam'
kiirttaniya sada' Harih.

[You must be more humble than the grass and more tolerant than the trees. You must give respect to those

whom no one respects, and always do kiirtana to the Lord.]

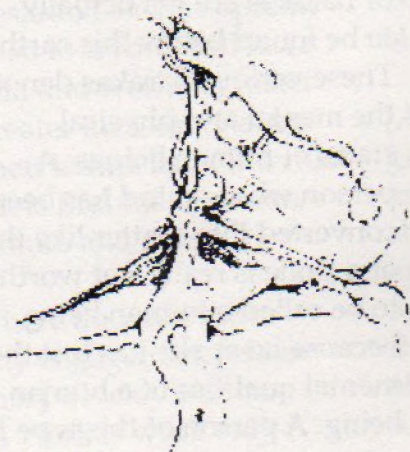
In order to get rid of abhima'na, one will have to cultivate the habit of being polite and humble. Just as a [blade of grass] may lie on the ground [underfoot], but does not, through its remaining humble, lose its importance, so a person will never become insignificant by being humble. Humility such as that of the [blade of grass] can alone save a person from abhima'na. Forbearance and tolerance like that of a tree which, even while being cut, continues to give its cool shade, are also necessary in order to keep away from abhima'na.

A person who is always engaged in the thought of his or her pratis't'ha' must learn how to care about the respect and prestige of others. Such a person must never forget that respect begets respect, and that he or she should always honour those who are not honoured by anyone. A constant practice of this type will remove the evil effects of the desire for pratis't'ha'. One easy way to do this is that you always do namaska'ra first and do not create a situation in which you may have to do prati-namaska'ra.

And finally, a person who moves about puffed up with vanity and arrogance, and is always engaged in gaorava, self-aggrandizement, will be able to improve only by utilizing his or her time in kiirtana. If a person keeps himself or herself engaged in kiirtana, that person will not have time to criticize and slander anyone in order to project his or her own image by comparison and contrast. So it is a must for such a person to do a lot of kiirtana, so that the person does not get time to indulge in the despicable activity of paraninda' [slandering].

Therefore spiritual aspirants who have set their eyes on Parama Purus'a as their goal must always strive to get rid of a'lasya [lethargy] and aham'ka'ra, and gain the full benefits of jina'na and karma, so as to arouse and enliven bhakti, which is the only road to the journey's end. The person will have to engage himself or herself in work for the collective welfare, will have to cultivate the qualities of humility, forbearance and tolerance, will have to learn to honour those who are honoured by none, and will have to participate in and organize kiirtanas.

"It is a fact that the force of Avidya disturbs a spiritualist more than it disturbs an ordinary person. Various situations arise in life such as material difficulties, family unrest, abundant wealth, tremendous reputation, accute financial distress or extreme humiliation. Sadhakas will have to bravely confront these mundane situations as a test. They must never think in terms of retreat, it would be fatal, for the Avidya force would stab them as soon as their backs were turned."



Dear all,
my warmest namaskar!

The Global Kiirtan wave continues to roll... but it needs more surfers!

Several margiis and acaryas have commented to me that although they cannot commit to fixed kiirtan times they are reminded to sing kiirtan a lot more during the day and how it elevates their minds and creates a sweet vibration all around..

However, fixed times have their advantages too! Last night I was tired as i came home late after classes. However, I have committed to 30 mins of kiirtan, late evening. Then as i remembered that at that moment my brothers and sisters in Taiwan were singing their paincajanya kiirtan, I felt inspired to push myself a bit. I sang and danced, still a little tired of the day.. until after 25 minutes a flow of sweet love swept my mind, and i continued to dance and sing unaware of the time. Good thing there is no max time! Had i not committed to 30 mins at that time slot, I would have probably given in to my tiredness, called it a day earlier and slept missing this Bliss and Grace..

Join the Global Kiirtan!!!

in His sweet flow,
Didi Rasamayii

You can contact Didi
to find out more at:
rasamayii@gmail.com

Namaskar from Caracas!

For me, the most exciting project of my life is just beginning. I have been permitted by Proutist Universal to work 50% of the time in Venezuela to open a Prout Research Institute, and 50% of the time in Europe. So I arrived here in Venezuela yesterday on a 3-month ticket. Dharmapal, an LFT from Hungary and an architect by training, was supposed to arrive the same day, but the one-year ticket he bought had a 2-and-a-half-hour layover in Miami, and he was not allowed to board his flight because he didn't have a US visa for those 150 minutes! He is now struggling in Lisbon to overcome this political obstacle!

Instead of renting an office and residence, we are buying a house, which we should be able to completely pay off with four years of rent money. More news on that in the coming days after the contract is signed. Simultaneously we will legally register PRI as a foundation. We have started constructing a web site at: www.ve.prout.org

For the first three months we will create a team of from five to ten full time volunteer

interns, some from abroad, some from Venezuela. The focus of our research will be on cooperatives. We believe this is the most valuable practical contribution that Prout can make in Venezuela at this time, due to the extraordinary number of 120,000 co-ops that have been started, and the insufficient training, evaluation and support of them. Our plan will include:

- Review national and international research on cooperatives and cooperative training programs.
- Study Sarkar's writings and those of other Proutists to compile a clear Prout model for ideal cooperatives.
- Implement a needs assessment of cooperatives and related public institutions that would examine current conditions of cooperatives.
- Analyze available public and private documents in the country, including statistical analysis of quantitative data.
- Interview and consult with key leaders in the cooperative movement in Venezuela, in both public and private organizations, to discuss their experience and opinions.
- Make a representative sample of Venezuelan

cooperatives randomly chosen that include different sizes (both large and small numbers of members), different duration (years of operation), different locations (large city, small city and rural), different sectors (transport, handicrafts, agricultural, food production, manufacturing, etc.).

- Set up focus group meetings with cooperative and community members
- Design a survey questionnaire to get a representative view of the challenges and needs of Venezuelan cooperatives, and also to assist in the categorization of cooperatives for analysis purposes.
- Analyze and triangulate data from diverse sources in order to determine precise needs and perspectives of public agencies, cooperative members, and affected communities.
- Consult with cooperative experts in Venezuela and in other countries to discuss the analysis of data and identify effective and culturally-sensitive components of a cooperative training and evaluation program.

During the fourth month the following "deliverables" will be produced in both Spanish

"When the devotee is able to hear, feel, realize and understand the will of Parama Purusa through having developed a relationship of love with Him, it is called a'pta va'kya. As devotees, you should follow only a'pta va'kya. You should remember that the Sixteen Points are your a'pta va'kya."

and English:

1. A press release announcing the opening of the PRI Venezuela and its initial projects.

2. A "Frequently Asked Questions" with short replies to the above questions.

3. An academic article submitted for publication to university journals outlining the reality of Venezuelan cooperatives and recommendations.

4. A popular article on the same subject submitted to progressive magazines and newspapers.

5. A project proposal to develop a cooperative training program for Venezuela that can be submitted to various foundations and government bodies to request funding.

I would like to invite interested people to join this historic project in one or more of the following ways:

1. Be a volunteer intern! Come and help for a period of two months to a year or more. The benefits include:

- Intensively study Prout and apply it, by working in a team and sharing ideas daily via telephone and email with some of the best Proutist thinkers and activists around the world.

- Learn Spanish and/or English, with 90 minutes of daily class time according to your level, and total immersion.

- Experience

the "Bolivarian Revolution" of President Hugo Chavez, one of the most exciting political, economic and social transformations taking place. See first hand what happens when the consciousness of poor people is raised and they are empowered to overcome poverty through education at all levels, free health care and cooperatives. Review the successes and critically question the failures. Personally meet and discuss with key leaders of this historical process.

- Work collectively in a professional environment that is respectful of all, where every idea counts.

- Strengthen your meditation and daily practices in a supportive and caring spiritual environment.

Expectations:

- Every applicant will be interviewed by telephone.

- Those who are accepted will have to provide their own transportation to Caracas.

- PRI will provide sattvik vegetarian food, accommodation and money for your local transportation.

- You will be expected to work 40 hours a week on specific tasks that will be monitored.

- PRI will try to fairly resolve any problems, grievances or difficulties you may have while you volunteer with us;

2. Be a PRI research assistant at home! We need help to research on the Internet very specific questions and tasks.

If you can spare a few hours a week, we'll send you the list. Your job will include finding, reading and analyzing significant articles on the topic.

3. Donate in cash or kind!

The Institute needs a library of good quality books and periodicals related to Prout and social sciences. If you have a motor vehicle in good working order that you can donate, we'll arrange the shipment. If you can donate funds, please remember that every little bit helps. If you are in the USA, we can arrange a tax-exempt receipt for your donation.

4. Come visit! See the project and the country first hand. We will ask for a minimum donation of US\$5 or €4 per day to cover food and accommodation costs. We are hoping to organize a global Prout Convention in late March 2007. More news will come on this soon.

Please write me if you are interested in any of the above:
maheshvarananda[at]prout.org

Brotherly,
Dada Maheshvarananda

"..in the realm of Dharma there should be clear-cut injunctions in the form of dharma shastra (scriptural treatise) and simultaneously there must be a strict guardian who during his lifetime guides himself as well as others according to those scriptural injunctions. After his demise, he will live forever in his teachings, which, although given for a particular age, will become a code of conduct for all time."

*There is a man who sits
in this bleak brown emptiness of land,
tending a handful of sheep.
Yet to him it is not empty,
it rends a meaning drawn from
familiarity;
for me I seek out landmarks that I
know,
and amidst the scattered snow
I find none;*

*If I were him,
I'd be minstrel singing,
calling to the mystery of the vastness,
the ancient past
that calls the coming future;
I'd rend the surroundings full with
songs,
sending them into the air
to waft away again
into the great cosmic play of things,
as I searched for landmarks
amidst the earth and never-ending sky,
to distinguish the blurry lines
between past and present, know
and unknown,
You and I.*

2.
*Let the tears fall down near
your heart
where it hurts most
Let the sorrow permeate deeply
so that you understand the
feeling of love.
Let divisions break us
so that we understand the
precious nature of unity.
There is a bittersweet sadness
in parting
which adds to the beauty of life
and autumn leaves are
beautiful
in their preparation to fall in
death.*

3.

*When You come to me,
sometimes I imagine
garlanding You
in the wildflowers of the
Mongolian summer.*

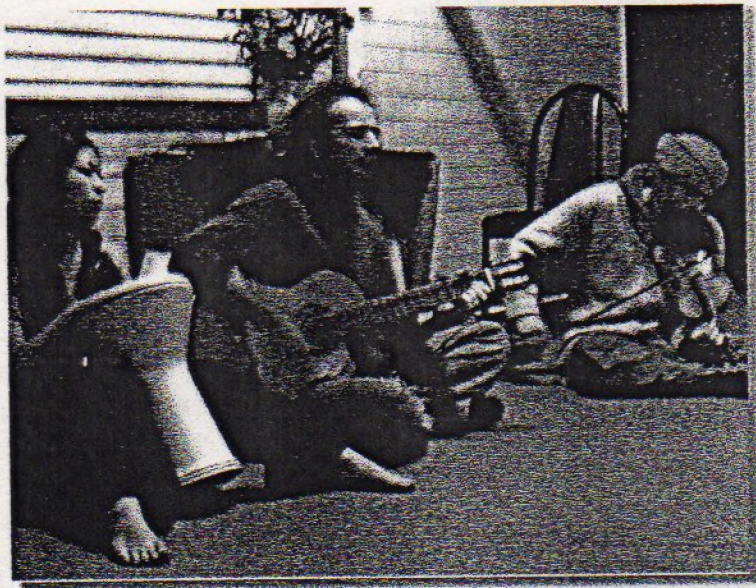
*Thank You for bringing me here
closer to You,
so that I can garland You
in thousands of tiny flowers,
the size of winter snowflakes
shimmering in the air.*

*Garlands of edelweiss and
daisies,
scented purple petals
and clusters of white,
threaded sweet-scented
as tiny living jewels
to give to You
as gifts of Your creation.*

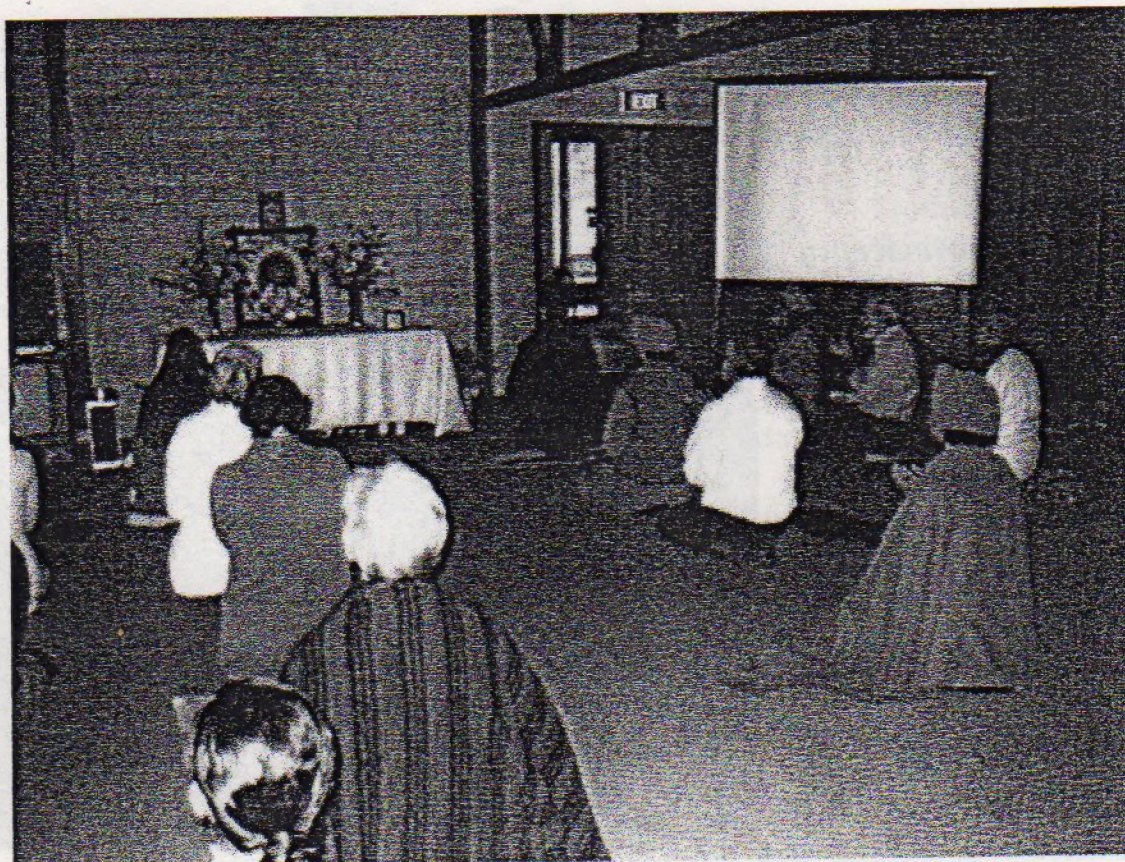
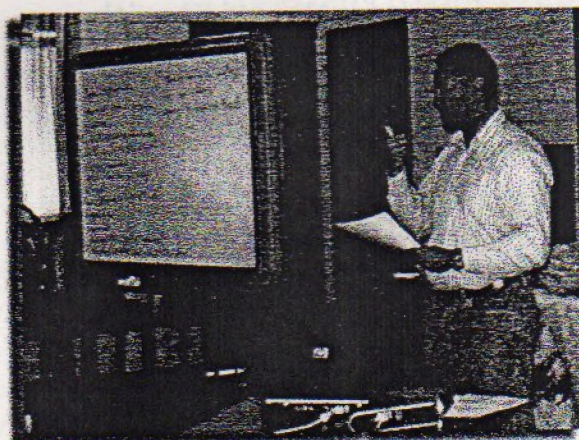
from LFT Tejasvinii working in Mongolia



Winter Sectorial Conference 2006



From top right to left: Evenings full of inspiring Bhajans and Baba stories, Navinji giving a talk, blissful sadhana, yummy food, and stimulating workshops! All this and more was enjoyed at the mid year winter sectorial retreat held in Adelaide.





Rational Spirituality - a new approach to Pracar

Ac Nabhaniilananda Avt

"Among all the deeds of virtue, pracar of spirituality has the most prominent place. This can be performed only by those who themselves are spiritual aspirants."

Shrii Shrii Anandamurti

Introduction

Ananda Marga has been active in Dharma Pracar for more than five decades now, and different approaches have been tried in different countries, sometimes successfully, sometimes less so.

Lately though, I think that we have not been as focused on this task as we should be. I believe that our mission would benefit greatly from a careful re-evaluation of our whole approach to pracar, particularly in those parts of the world where people are highly educated and accustomed to having ideas presented to them in a sophisticated manner.

In the 1970's there was an explosion of interest in oriental spirituality in many countries outside India, particularly in New York, Berlin and Suva Sectors, and Ananda Marga grew rapidly, as did many other spiritual groups. With that strong beginning, most other spiritual groups have since established a strong membership base and are financially self-sufficient. In failing to do this, Ananda Marga is the exception. In spite of the tremendous potential of Ananda Marga's ideas and

practices, we have lagged behind.

I think the time has come for us to address this situation and to amend it. If we are to do justice to Baba's unmatched Ideology our pracar effort needs a major upgrade.

This is a large task. It will need a concerted co-operative effort. I'm writing this paper hoping to initiate such an effort, and to invite input in devising a new strategy for Dharma Pracar, and to develop a dynamic new teaching and training program that can revolutionize our Pracar work all over the world.

Overview

Baba gave us some definite hints regarding who we should target in our pracar efforts. He said that we will find margiis largely from the educated middle classes, and that between the ages of 16 and 26 people are more idealistic. This has certainly been borne out by our experience. If we are to appeal to idealistic intellectuals, students, progressive minded people and others who already intuitively accept many of Ananda Marga's ideals in their hearts, I think we need to do three things:

1. Identify the key concepts or realizations that

make someone a margii, emphasising the unique features of Ananda Marga.

2. Develop a teaching curriculum and a training programme so that margiis and wholetimers can learn how to communicate these concepts in a manner that is involving, clear, creative and inspiring. This could be the basis for a whole new series of beginners, intermediate and advanced classes and retreats.

3. Develop a marketing strategy so that our classes and retreats are well attended, and are co-ordinated properly so that each activity leads to another follow up activity. We have to provide proper and consistent guidance to new spiritual aspirants on the rocky path of Tantra. This should also be projected through the internet to make the information and materials are more widely available.

Key Questions

A few years ago when contemplating the question of how we should approach Dharma Pracar I found myself pondering two questions:

1. What it is that makes someone a margii?
What do they really need to know, or more importantly, realize, in order to

become a genuinely ideological margii? If we can identify the key realizations that transform a person, then we will know what to aim for in our prakar efforts.

Once we have identified these key realizations, we need to develop ways to teach them, or induce their realization. How can we effectively demonstrate the relevance of this point in peoples lives?

Let us take the example of one of our basic Tantric principles: 'Struggle is the Essence of Life'. It is essential for a Sadhaka to realize this. Otherwise they will not be ready to face obstacles, which will surely come, and will not have the perserverence to continue on the path of sadhana. To help people understand this, I might ask my class to give examples of people whom they admire – great people they would like to emulate. They might come up with names of people like Nelson Mandela, Mother Theresa, Jesus Christ, Buddha. Then if we look even briefly at the lives of any one of these individuals it is immediately apparent that greatness is never achieved without tremendous struggle. Unless they mention someone like Mozart, who was a born genius. Then you have to get into past life theory, but even that can be a creative route to another philosophical subject.

I was going to write that 'we have to make our philosophy relevant', but this is wrong. Our philosophy is already relevant – it is very practical, Our task is simply to *demonstrate* it's relevance through examples and exercises, so that our students

will immediately grasp it's relevance.

You might continue the above exercise by asking them to think of something they've achieved in their own lives that they are proud of or satisfied with. Or examples from the animal kingdom – how a pupae becomes a butterfly, or how life itself evolves. As is the case with most fundamental truths, there is evidence supporting it all around us.

The principle 'Struggle is the Essence of Life', is also an example of my next point. This idea distinguishes Ananda Marga clearly from many New Age philosophies that seem to be propagating the idea that meditation and spirituality is about avoiding struggle and just relaxing and letting your mind float etc. Or the huge percentage of American Society who, convinced that life is supposed to be free of pain, struggle or discomfort, anesthetize themselves with tranquilizers to the point that they experience very little at all.

Failure to appreciate the significance, and relevance, of this single philosophical truth can undermine the moral fibre of an entire society and lead to it's downfall.

So rather than going into great detail on philosophy, and expecting my students to remember a lot of samskrta words, I feel that the impact on their minds, and their lives, will be far greater if I can help them to understand WHY a certain principle is important.

When they have a firm

grasp of these basic principles, they can learn the details easily – they will seek out the information themselves – you will hardly need to teach them, because they will be motivated.

And motivation is the key. Our main objective in any prakar program, whether it is teaching a class, or running a seminar, or conducting a retreat, or even organizing a RAWA concert or a vegetarian dinner, is always the same: to inspire the participants to attend the next program. And the next, and the next after that, until, before they realize what is happening, they feel part of Ananda Marga.

Inspiration is more important than information.

2. What makes Ananda Marga unique?

What sets us apart from other spiritual groups? How are we different than Buddhists or Hindus or yogis following other Gurus, or the plethora of New Age groups? What features of Ananda Marga distinguish us from other spiritual groups, and in particular yoga groups?

I raise this question because there has been a tendency in recent years to do prakar mainly through yoga asana classes. While I do not think this is without value, and it is indeed a part of the work of SDM department, I question the wisdom of allowing this to become our main means of Dharma Prakar, for two reasons.

The first is strategic. This approach places us in a position of competition with the well-established asana schools and Yoga groups that have

proliferated across the globe in recent years. They have many advantages in this competition. They are better financed with teachers trained specifically in asana teaching, having nicer premises in better locations.

We are generally less well organized, and have many other demands on our resources. Our teachers may be well established in spiritual practice, but are usually not expert asana teachers.

The second reason is ideological, as well as strategic. The physical aspect of yoga generally attracts people who are interested in slimming, or relaxation, which is not an ideal target audience – the majority of them are not so interested in meditation or spirituality. While this approach has created a few margiis in some units, I am far from convinced that it is the most effective approach.

I have always found that promoting meditation practice, our holistic philosophy, and social service is more attractive to potential margiis than asana classes. I am not the only one who has noticed this.

I think we need to re-evaluate our whole strategy.

In attempting to answer these two questions I arrived at with sixteen key concepts people need to realize in order to become Ideological Margiis, many of which are unique to Ananda Marga.

The combination of these concepts is perhaps the most unique thing of all. I would suggest that these could be a starting point for a new series of Dharma Pracar classes

and seminars.

Sixteen Key Concepts

1. Happiness comes from within
2. As you think, so you become
3. Sense of Purpose in life
4. The need for balance
5. Struggle is the essence of life
6. Self-discipline
7. Satsaunga
8. Service
9. Surrender
10. Devotion
11. All is One
12. Sacrifice
13. Role of Guru
14. The need for Revolution
15. Ananda Marga Mission
16. Experience of Cosmic Consciousness

Let me expand on these points

1. Happiness comes from within – this is a fundamental idea behind sadhana, which Baba explains in Ananda Sutram Chapter 2. The proposition is simple an universal: Humans are distinct from animals in that we yearn for infinite happiness. The external world is finite so we cannot satisfy this yearning externally. Furthermore, happiness is not contained in objects – it comes from within us. Therefore to satisfy this yearning we must turn our minds inward, through meditation.

2. As you think, so you become. This is a widely acknowledged, yet

widely misunderstood precept forms the basis of magic, positive thinking and much New Age mumbo jumbo. But it is a powerful Tantric law that explains why spiritual ideation, as in our first and second lessons in particular, has such a profoundly transformative effect.

3. Sense of Purpose in life. In affluent societies people without a sense of meaning in their lives drift towards despair. Our concept of spiritual evolution, and our sophisticated development of it in our philosophies of Dharma and Brahmachakra, once grasped, inject new dynamism into an individuals life. It is not difficult to devise exercises for students to examine this concept in the context of their own lives.
4. The need for balance. If we look at different spiritual groups, many of them have pieces of the puzzle. Hatha Yoga, sentient diet, service, philosophy, meditation, chanting, but Ananda Marga is unique in combining in a balanced fashion, all of the necessary elements for a holistic lifestyle and philosophy. This balance of internal and external, and physical, mental and spiritual, Prama
5. Struggle is the essence of life. See above for a possible way to develop this point.
6. Self-discipline. One of the

reasons so many people drop out of Ananda Marga is because this is a path that demands a fairly high level of self discipline. We need to help our students understand the great value of self discipline – how it can make our lives successful. One of the distinguishing features of Uttama Guru – the highest kind of Guru, is that He imposes discipline on His disciples.

7. Satsaunga. Humans are social animals. We are greatly influenced by those around us. The easiest way to gain spiritual inspiration, and to get good habits, is to keep the company of those who already have these things. For the beginning Sadhaka this is a must.
8. Service. As our spiritual awareness develops we begin to identify more strongly with other living things, and a desire arises to help them. This is a natural expression of our spirituality, and Ananda Marga is almost unique amongst spiritual groups of Oriental origin in being active in social service.
9. Surrender. Often confused with fatalism, but quite distinct from it, spiritual surrender means to accept the will of the creator, even if it does not please us, or we do not understand it, in our small minded ignorance. It is an essential attitude to cultivate if we are to transcend our egotism.
10. Devotion – Bhakti was identified as the

highest path by the great Shankaracarya, for it engages the support of the most powerful human emotion of them all – the power of love. If our yearning for the perfect love can be directed towards the Supreme, this is the most sure way towards spiritual success.

11. All is One – Baba Nam Kevalam. Our philosophy is non-dualistic, and this is reflected in our practices and our world view. It distinguishes us from many religions which are, for practical purposes, dualistic.
12. Sacrifice – the value of sacrifice on the spiritual path is emphasized in Tantra. Another point that distinguishes us from the New Age movement
13. Role of Guru – this is also fundamental to Tantra, but is an idea that is widely

“To understand Ananda Marga Mission, you really have to become involved in it, and this is also how one becomes established in spiritual practice.”

misunderstood, and even abused. But to become a full fledged margii, some realization of this is necessary. It can help a lot if we are able to present this idea in a psychological way, and introduce the concept only when people are ready for it.

14. The need for Revolution – the philosophy of Prout is truly revolutionary. There are few other spiritual groups that even considers the issues that Prout addresses in a unique and comprehensive manner. This gives us a great advantage when appealing

to young idealistic people.

15. Ananda Marga Mission – Baba’s Vision for His organization, and society at large, is of the grandest type. He has created potential roles for millions of people in His organization, specializing in their areas of interest. To understand Ananda Marga Mission, you really have to become involved in it, and this is also how one becomes established in spiritual practice.
16. Experience of Cosmic Consciousness – Spirituality is not theory. To grasp what Ananda Marga is all about, it is necessary to have a taste of spiritual awareness. We should encourage our students to seek out this experience in extended retreats, long kiirtans, LFT training or through visiting India on a guided spiritual tour.

Developing a Dynamic Teaching Course

My initial proposal is this. We use the above 16 concepts as the basis of a new course in Ananda Marga Ideology. This does not mean that we need to abandon the subjects and materials we’ve used before. All of our practices and philosophy can be included under these points. For example, if you wanted to teach your group about meditation, it might come

under "Happiness comes from Within" and "As You Think, so you Become"

Or if you wanted to teach about Asanas, it might come under "The need for Balance" and "Self-Discipline."

The difference here is that these points start from where ordinary people are at, and aim to establish *why* these ideas or practices are important. The emphasis is on the *why*. Once people understand the *why*, they will be interested in more information. That is the time to give it to them. In sophisticated intellectual societies, people always want to know 'why'. This is where the concept of Rational spiritual comes in.

So I think these 16 Concepts, or something developed from that, could act as the basis of a whole new course in Ananda Marga Ideology. It might run over the course of a year, and include beginners, intermediate and advanced classes, and retreats, and culminate in a one week intensive retreat – a kind of mini-LFT training – to give them a real experience of deep meditation.

"No matter what stratum of life you find yourself in, if you love the Great, if you try to move towards Him, your insignificance will expand into greatness...If you adopt the reverse approach, that is, if you say, "I am so insignificant. Let me first remove my smallness, then I will proceed towards the Great. This is a huge psychological blunder."

Sectorial News

Ananda Marga River School

Ananda Marga River School at **Ananda Kamala, Maleny**, is continuing to grow and prosper. Now with over 160 students it finish 2006 with a performance by each of the 7 primary school grades. The highlight being a performance done on Baba's life (See the two photos).

"Our Year 2 teacher, Anna, worked very hard to write a beautiful musical play about Baba's life, based on stories from the book, "Baba." It was filled with the most touching songs, and included lovely stories about Baba saying the mantra in the temple, riding on the tiger, refusing to eat meat, wandering in the jungle. "85 years ago, on the day of the full moon, in India, a child was born. Born with the rising sun...."

Tassie Samaj Conference -- Great Success!

Last weekend around one hundred people attended the second annual Future Tasmania Conference organised by Liila, and the Hobart margiis with help from the Prout Institute of Australia. It was called "Exploring Tasmanian Futures 2006: Water, Food and Forests".



"Baba" giving darshan at the Railway Colony.

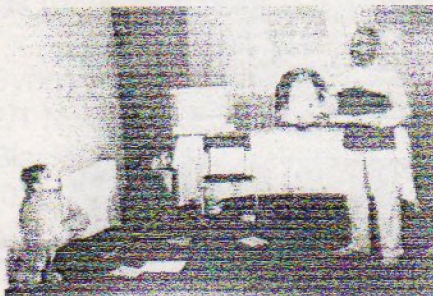
It was an impressive event, held in at the University of Tasmania Law Lecture Theater. The Conference went for two full weekend days and had an excellent and diverse range of speakers including MPs, top activists, leaders, and thinkers involved in regional issues. On Saturday night there was also a film festival with three independent films about Tasmania, including Shivanii's new film about Tasmanian water issues.

The Conference received excellent media attention including national and local radio interviews, complete coverage in the evening news on several channels both nights and newspaper coverage. Shortly following the Conference Liila received a call from the Premier's office saying they would like to be involved with the Future Tasmania group and to potentially in future conferences.



"Didis" in the school nlaa

The event was very well organised with many volunteer helpers. Several acharyas helped to prepare a first class vegetarian lunch on both days, plus morning and afternoon teas. The program was smooth and professional and ended in a well facilitated discussion session on the last day.



Pracar Success in Sydney

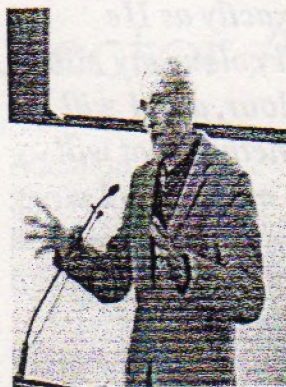
from Dharani

Sydney has adopted two more locations for teaching Yoga asanas due to demand.

There was demand from the Newington Class that they want to attend twice a Week. I requested Auburn Council to allot the hall on Thursday's and Auburn Council has agreed to give me the hall for the 2nd day. There will be 3 classes in Newington starting from Term 1 in 2007.

Youth Services in Auburn Area have requested me to arrange a lady Yoga Teacher for ladies commencing in April 2007.

Auburn Council is happy to give me two more community halls free of charge to run yoga classes in 2007. Depending upon the resources and dedication of Dada's and day's hall are made available I am planning to run Yoga Classes in two more locations in 2007.



Bhaktaviarya giving his talk

Nine Hundred People Enrolled for On-Line Pracar

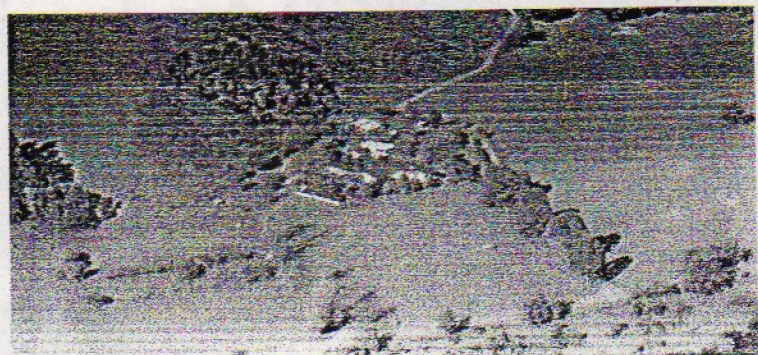
In Canberra Dharmadeva continues with his online meditation course. Around 900 people continue to be enrolled for online meditation classes, which give a comprehensive overview of Ananda Marga philosophy and practice. New interest in the classes is expressed on a daily basis, with much positive feedback. The course is intended to mainly portray to the public the breadth and vision of Ananda Marga with practical exercises and steps for those interested in spiritual lifestyle. Those who have sought initiation have expressed their gratitude in having available for them



materials that give them a full insight into Ananda Marga.

The pracar material for the classes has been distributed around the world so that they can be used for Ananda Marga presentations. There are numerous slide shows and informative digital material which can easily be used or adapted for any classes or programmes, particularly at seminars and talks. The modules range from introduction to meditation, vegetarian diet, spiritual literature, service, biopsychology, mysticism, social outlook, and others. A complete curriculum and refinement is expected over the next 18 months."

Get regular good news by subscribing to Suva Sector Good News on-line. Go to: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Suva-GoodNews/>



The new Vistara Prout Cooperative in New Zealand

News from Didi Ananda Shamita

At a multicultural festival in Toowoomba in August, we had a pracar table with Ananda Marga books and CDs. More than 40 people signed up to learn about meditation and yoga.

At this festival we made contact with a lady who lives in St. George (about 300 kms west of Toowoomba) and she was very eager to have us do a seminar there. She introduced us to the local skill centre who helped us set up and promote a meditation and yoga programme.

In November Suveda' and I conducted a one day seminar..15 people attended. Suveda' prepared a delicious sentient lunch and snacks.

The attendees enjoyed the programme and invited us to do another one in April 2007. It was interesting doing pracar there because that is cattle country, vegetarianism, meditation and yoga are ideas that are not common in those parts!

We were also interviewed by a local newspaper reporter and the article appeared in the local newspaper. The reporter knew about Ananda Marga because she is originally from Stanthorpe and one of her friends attended the Mt. Tully school at Ananda Palli!

We sold a good amount of books and CDs at both these programmes. Hopefully kiirtan is being heard in St. George now.

"I will do exactly as He wants, I will colour my mind with His colour, and I will not think whether that will bring joy to me or not. Let Him be pleased...that is my only wish" This is the highest stage of devotion."

Prout Institute Launches On-Line College

In Melbourne brother Jayanta has been busy with the Prout Institute of Australia (PIA)

PIA is launching an online course providing Graduate Studies in Prout and Neo-Humanism. The course opens in February with professors Subhod, Ivana and Manorainjan -- all PhDs.

PIA has also launched a website where anyone can learn about Prout. As the site states:

The Prout Institute of Australia (PIA) is an education and research institution which promotes:

- Cooperative economics
- Self-reliant communities
- Economic decentralisation and global governance
- Sustainable resource management
- New definitions of economic progress

Learning for Personal & Social Transformation


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The Certificate in Prout Studies includes the following eight subjects. These subjects may also be studied individually.

- Introduction to Prout Studies
- Tantra, Spirituality and Social Change
- Macrohistory and World Futures
- Transformative Economics
- Neohumanism, Policy Making & Contemporary Issues
- Frontiers of Science
- Gender, Spirituality and Coordinated Cooperation
- Education for Liberation



Prout College gives students the opportunity to develop critical and ethical insights into contemporary social issues. It also provides students with a range of practical

PIA aims to foster a critical understanding of the social and economic theories known as the Progressive Utilisation Theory (Prout) and Neohumanism.

The website, which brother Bhaktaviirya designed, is located at www.pia.org.au

Other PROUT News

Meanwhile Narada Muni's video "No Woolies in Maleny" which features Bhaktaviirya talking about Prout, was shown in New York & LA recently at the International Independent Film and Video Film festival.

A Maleny businessman is also promoting it to 700 academics & professors.

Narada's updated Coop video "Creating Prosperous Communities" was shown recently to a very appreciated audience in Maleny recently. One woman is wanting to promote it overseas.

Recently his Prout video was translated into Japanese. It is now available in English, Japanese, Chinese, Spanish, Portuguese and Hindi.

Subhod continues his work spreading Prout and spirituality in his many invitations to work with high-level councils and business groups on future planning.



The photo appeared in the newspaper.

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"Japakriya and dhyana should be practised with the ideation that one is serving Paramapurusa. This is internal service. If internal service is not rendered properly, true external service becomes impossible. Hence it is said "'Individual salvation is also a service to humanity.' External service purifies the mind, and with a pure mind one is more capable of rendering service to one's Ista. Every sadhaka should render both types of service."
